

State of Alaska
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

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What Can I Do To Avoid Catching the Flu (Influenza)?

While there is no way to ensure that you will not catch the flu, there are several things you can do to reduce your risk. Practicing these “habits of healthy people” and encouraging those around you to do likewise will go a long way in reducing the spread of flu next influenza season.

- **Wash your hands** often with soap and water. Some people find that singing through the entire ABCs while they wash is a good way to wash long enough to thoroughly clean their hands.
- **Use hand sanitizer** when soap and water are not available. Keep some available where you will use it. For instance, keep some in your car to use before you eat that fast-food drive-through meal. Keep some at your desk or in your purse or backpack. Encourage your children to keep some in their locker at school and buy a bottle for the desk of your co-workers or your child’s teacher.
- **Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.** Never cough in the direction of someone. Cough or sneeze into a tissue or inside of your elbow. *Then* wash your hands or use hand sanitizer.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth** to avoid putting the flu virus where an infection can begin.
- **Stay home if you are ill.** If you have flu symptoms such as fever, body aches and cough, stay home from work or school and avoid public activities for at least five days (seven for children) to prevent spreading the disease to others.
- **Get a flu shot annually.** This is especially important if you are at high risk for severe illness, hospitalization or death from influenza. High-risk people are those 65 years and older, pregnant women, infants 6 – 23 months of age, and people with conditions that require regular medical care throughout the year. You should also get an annual flu shot if you are a health-care worker, or work with high-risk people in the home or community.

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